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THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF
WEST LONDON



Types of Cyber-bullying Involvement and Mental Health Problems

Findings from *EU Kids Online*, 2014

Dr Anke Görzig

What is cyber-bullying?



■ Bullying:

An act of aggression which is intentional, repetitive and directed towards an individual of lower power (cf. Olweus, 1993)

■ Cyber-bullying:

An act of aggression which is intentional, repetitive and directed towards an individual of lower power using *electronic forms of contact, specifically mobile phones or the internet* (Smith et al., 2006).

Bullying & adolescents mental health



- Traditional and cyber-bullying among adolescents are considered a **major public health concern** (Hertz et al., 2013).
- Involvement in bullying as a young person increases the **risk of suicide or suicide-related behaviours** (i.e., suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, self-harming) (Arseneault et al., 2006; Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013; Brunstein-Klomek, Sourander, & Gould, 2010; Price & Dalgleish, 2010).
- Bullying is associated with short and **long-term mental health difficulties** (depression, anxiety, conduct disorder) (Maughan, & Arseneault, 2014)
- Studies on traditional bullying have shown that it is important to differentiate between **different types of bullying involvement (bullies, victims and bully/victims)**

Types of bullying involvement



■ Suicide-related behaviours

(reviews, 30+ studies; Brunstein-Klomek et al., 2010; Kim & Leventhal, 2008)

- Bullies and victims are at risk
- Bully/victims are the most at-risk group

■ Psychological problems

- Victims: internalising (emotional problems), peer problems (Hawker & Boulton, 2000)
- Bullies: externalising (conduct problems) (Ttofi et al., 2011)
- Bully/victims: internalising + externalising, peer problems (Cook et al., 2010)

■ Psychological problems mediate between bullying and suicide-related behaviours? (cf. Hertz et al., 2013)

- Depression: traditional bullies but not cyber-bullies (Bauman et al., 2013)
- Delinquency/depression: bullies but not victims or bully/victims (Espelage & Holt, 2013)
- Traditional bullying was a risk factor for suicide-related behaviours independent of depression (Kaminski & Fang, 2009)

Cyber-bullying and suicide-related behaviours: Fact or moral panic?



Self-harm sites and cyberbullying: the threat to children from web's dark side
(*The Guardian*, 10.3.2014)

Suicide Among Children Is A Bigger Problem Than Ever Before, And Cyberbullying May Be The Cause
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More children 'self-harming because of cyber-bullying'
(*Metro*, 27.5.2014)

- Media reports and effects
 - Public concern has been amplified by the mass media, most risks are encountered by a small minority (Vandebosch et al., 2013)
 - Media reports have contributed to a dramatic bias in views on cyber-bullying (e.g., prevalence rates, cause for suicide etc.; Magid, 2011)

Types of *cyber*-bullying involvement

■ Suicide-related behaviours

- Cyber-victims: suicide ideation/attempts, self-harm
- Cyber-bullies: suicide ideation/attempts
(Bauman et al., 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Schneider et al., 2012)
- Cyber-bully/victims: most at-risk group (1 study; 18-24 yr olds)
(Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Schenk, Fremouw, & Keelan, 2013)

■ Psychological problems

- Cyber-victims: internalising / emotional problems
- Cyber-bullies: externalising / conduct problems
- Cyber-bully/victims: internalising & externalising problems
(Gradinger et al., 2009; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004)

→ Similar patterns, less evidence

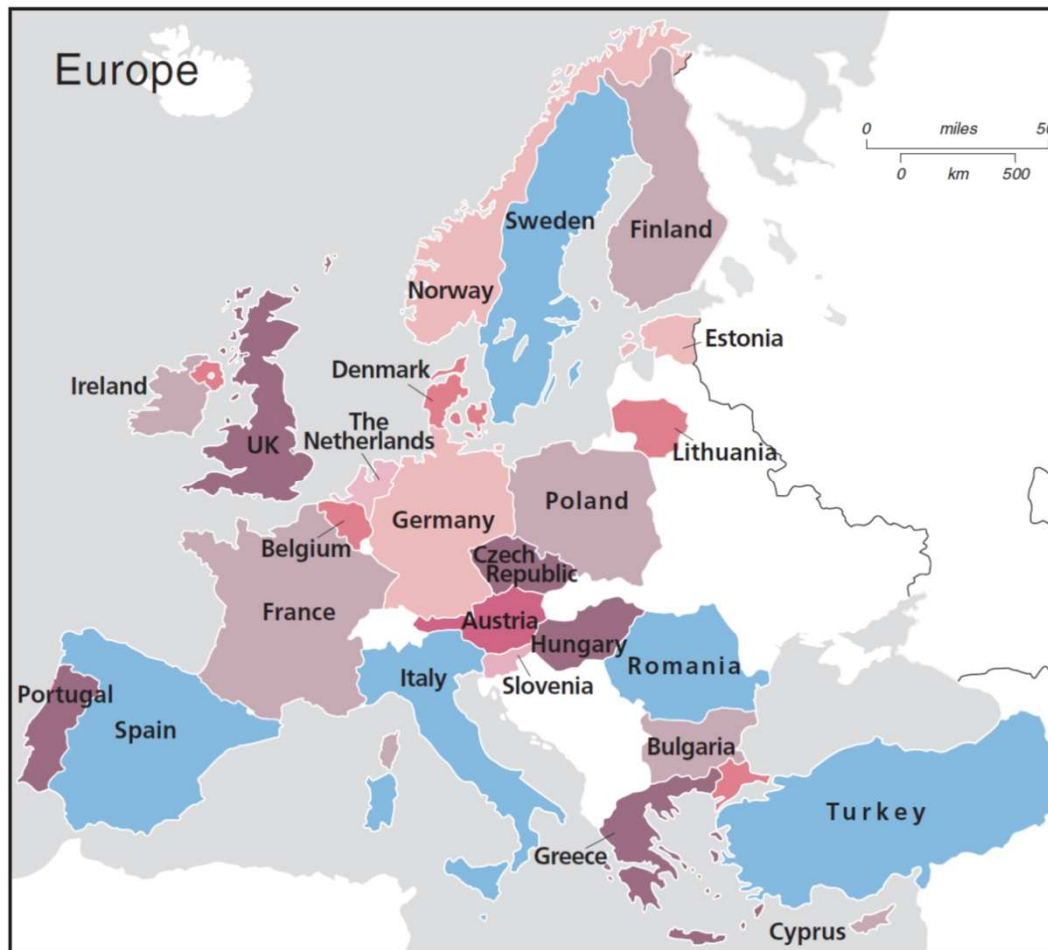
■ Psychological problems mediate between bullying and suicide-related behaviours?

The current study



- Research evidence comparing all cyber-bullying types within one sample is scarce
- Confirm similar patterns for bullying and cyber-bullying on
 - Relation of bullying types and suicide-related behaviours
 - Victims & bullies > not involved
 - Bully/victims >> not involved
 - Relation of bullying types psychological problems
 - Victims: internalising / emotional problems, peer problems
 - Bullies: externalising / conduct problems
 - Bully/victims: internalising & externalising problems
- Explore whether any links of cyber-bullying types with viewing of suicide-related web-content is mediated by psychological problems

Surveying 'Europe'



- Random stratified sample: ~ 1000 9-16 year old internet users per country; total of 25142 internet-users, 25 countries
- Fieldwork in spring/summer 2010; child + parent interviews at home, face to face
- Questions validated by cognitive/pilot testing; self-completion for sensitive questions; care with research ethics
- Informed by national stakeholders and an international advisory panel
- Survey covered access, use, activities, risks (sexual images, sexual messages, bullying, meeting strangers), parental mediation, coping, vulnerability

Cyber-bullying



Saying or doing hurtful or nasty things to someone. This can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time, for example.

This can include:

- teasing someone in a way this person does not like
- hitting, kicking or pushing someone around
- leaving someone out of things

When people are hurtful or nasty to someone in this way, it can happen:

- face to face (in person)
- by mobile phones (texts, calls, video clips)
- on the internet (e-mail, instant messaging, social networking, chatrooms)

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cyber-bullying

Viewing of suicide-related web-content*



In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen websites where people discuss...

- ways of committing suicide
- ways of physically harming or hurting themselves

Suicide

Self-harm

*(11+ yrs., N = 19,406)

Psychological Problems*



- **Strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ;** Goodman, 1998)
 - **Emotional difficulties**, e.g. “I am often unhappy, sad or tearful.”
 - **Peer problems**, e.g. “Other people my age generally like me.” (reversed)
 - **Conduct problems**, e.g. “I get very angry and often lose my temper.”
 - **5 items each, 3-point scale: (1 = *Not true*, 2 = *A bit true*, 3 = *Very true*)**

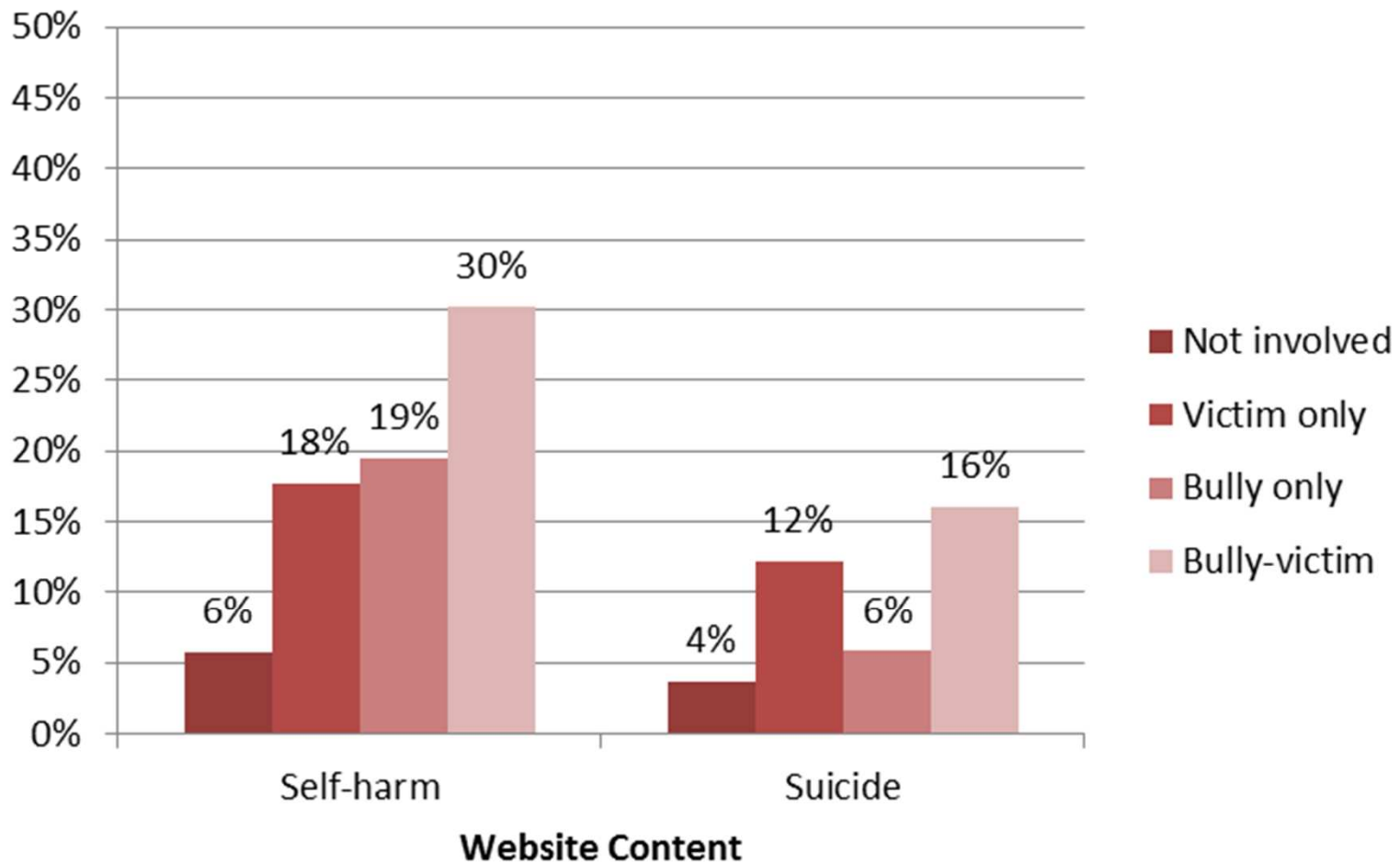
- **Borderline clinical cut-off points** (Goodman et al., 2000)
 - **Used widely for screening in CAMHS** (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services)
 - **Emotional difficulties: sum > 6**
 - **Peer problems: sum > 4**
 - **Conduct problems: sum > 4**

*(11+ yrs., N = 19,406)

Results



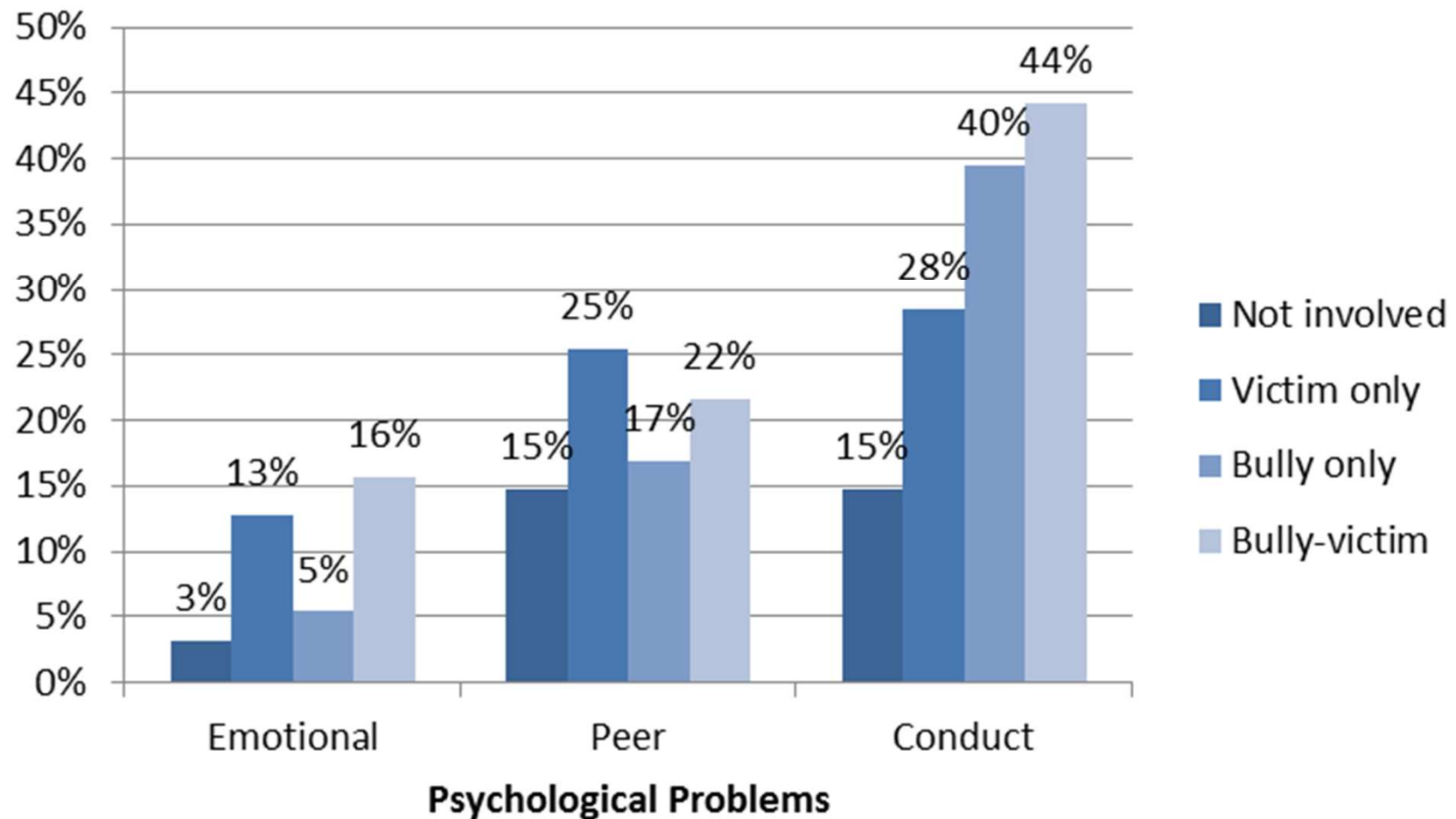
Percentages for Viewing of Suicide-Related Web-Content within Cyber-bullying Involvement Types.



Results



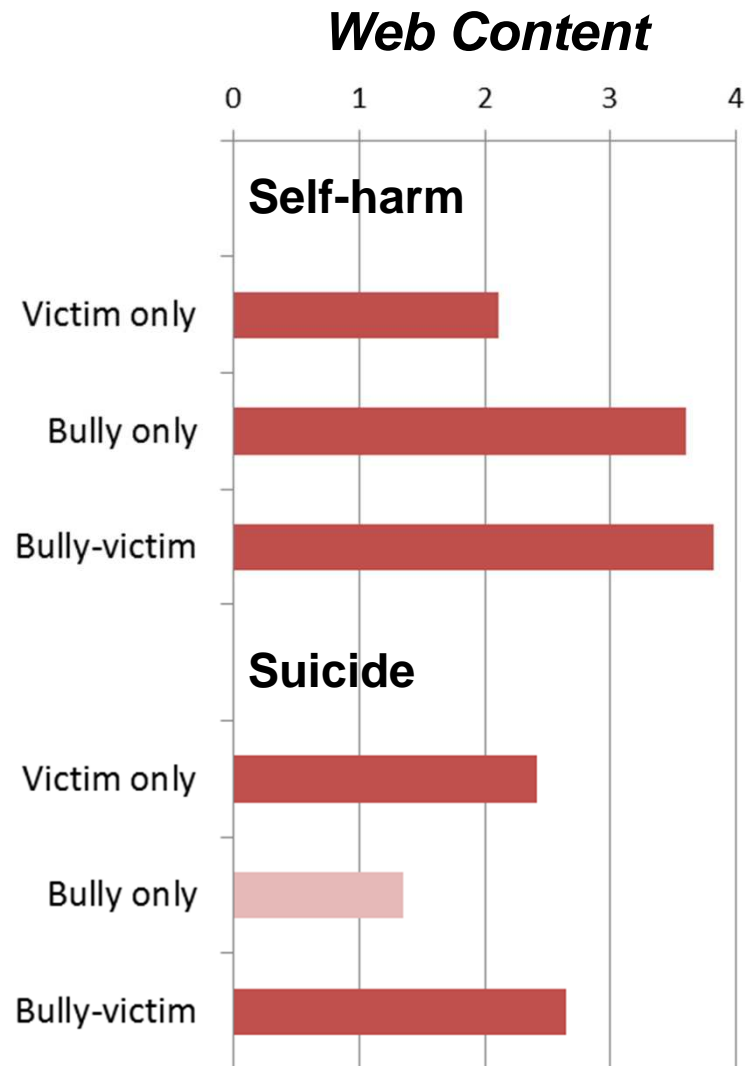
Percentages for Psychological Problems within Cyber-bullying Involvement Types.



Multi-Nominal Regressions: Viewing of Web-Content and Psychological Problems on Cyber-bullying Involvement Type



Regression – Step 1 (viewing of web content only)
Odds Ratios (reference group: not involved; controls: age, gender)



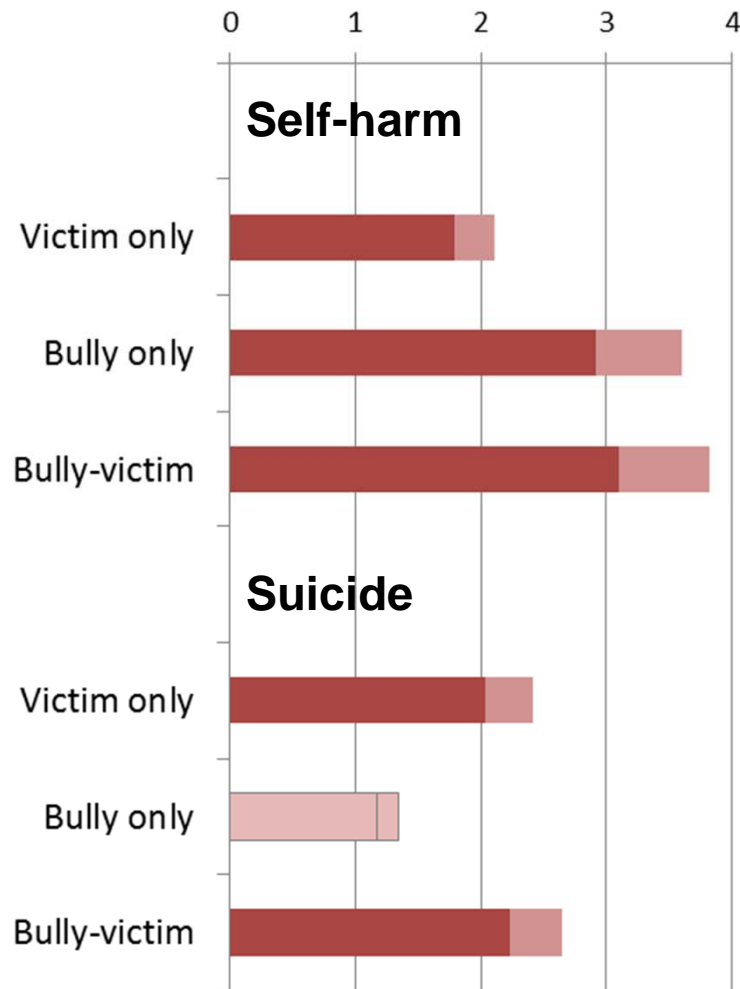
Solid fill indicate statistically significant coefficients

Multi-Nominal Regressions: Viewing of Web-Content and Psychological Problems on Cyber-bullying Involvement Type

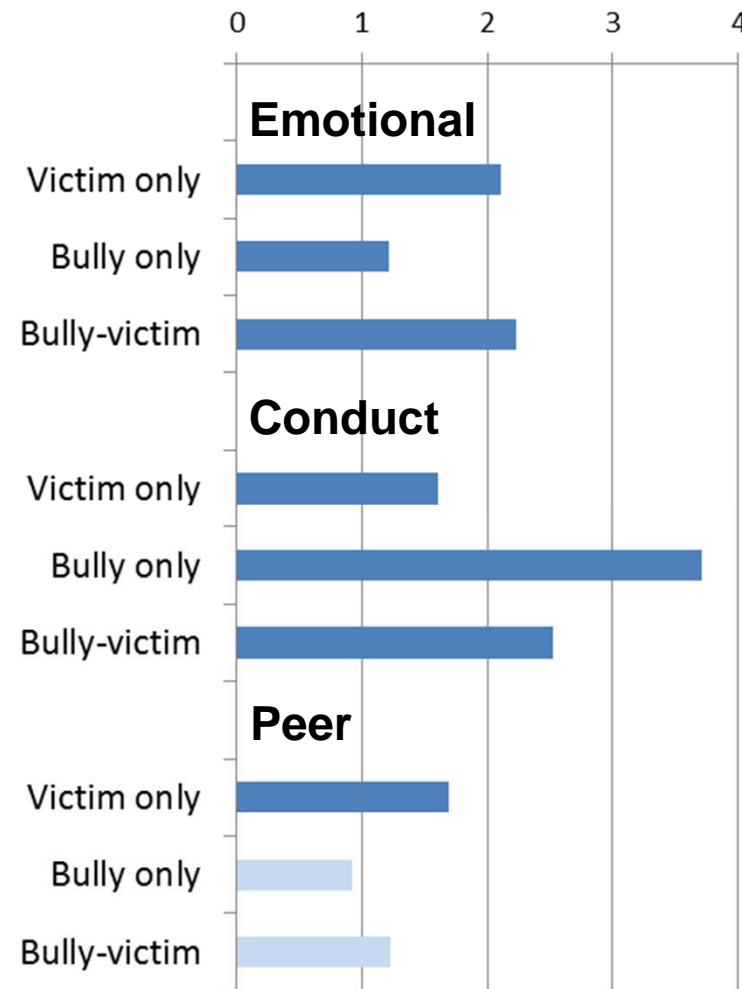


Regression – Step 2 (+ psych problems)
Odds Ratios (reference group: not involved; controls: age, gender)

Web Content



Psychological Problems



Solid fill indicate statistically significant coefficients

Discussion: Bullying & cyber-bullying

Similar patterns?



■ Suicide-related web content

- Cyber-bully/victims most vulnerable
- Generally all involved groups more at risk than not involved
- Exception: suicide – cyber-bullies no higher prevalence than not involved

■ Psychological problems

- Cyber-victims: emotional problems, peer problems
- Cyber-bullies: conduct problems
- Bully/victims: emotional problems, conduct problems
- Exception: conduct problems - cyber-victims higher prevalence than not involved

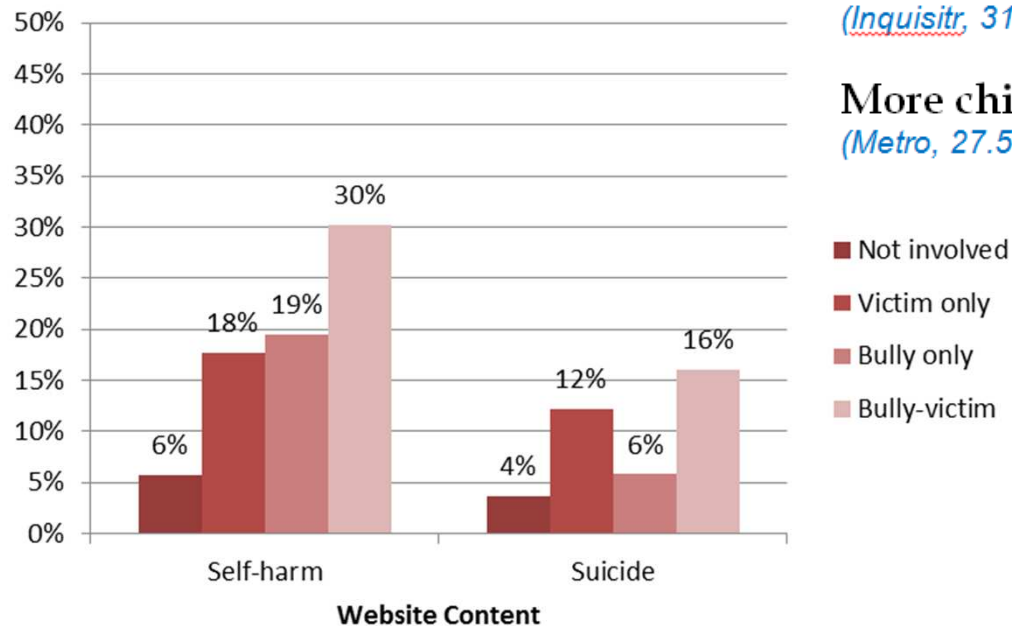
■ Psychological problems mediate between bullying and suicide-related behaviours?

- No change in coefficients when controlling for psychological problems
- Possible bi-directional nature of bullying and psychological problems (Kowalski & Limber, 2013)

Limitations



■ Cross-sectional study: no implications about causality



Self-harm sites and cyberbullying: the threat to children from web's dark side

(The Guardian, 10.3.2014)

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■ Intentions of viewing suicide-related web-content

Implications



- Mental health problems for different cyber-bullying involvement types on the whole resemble those for bullying involvement types
- Same kind of youth involved in online and offline risks (Görzig & Livingstone, 2014)
- Integrative prevention and intervention strategies (Finkelhor, 2014; Livingstone & Smith, 2014)
- Focus on adolescents' specific problems and developmental needs (Jones et al., 2013)
- Adolescents involved in (cyber-)bullying need support
 - Targeted towards involvement type
 - Prevent the causes and/or consequences of mental health problems



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